Zapruder family, government disagree

WASHINGTON (AP) — The haunting image of John F. Kennedy's assassination, captured in a 26-second home movie by a Dallas dressmaker, has been impressed on the national consciousness for nearly 35 years. Now, Abraham Zapruder's family is sparring with the Justice Department over the price tag for the historic footage.

The family is seeking $18.5 million for the film Zapruder shot as the president's motorcade moved through Dallas on Nov. 22, 1963. The government proposes to pay far less.

"It takes an awful lot of courage for someone in the government to determine what the value of this film is, but that's what's necessary for the government to take advantage of what we are trying to do," said Henry Zapruder, a Washington lawyer whose father died in 1970.

The original Zapruder film, considered a key piece of evidence in the investigation of Kennedy's assassination, has been stored in a National Archives film vault since the 1970s. The Zapruder family has maintained the rights to it.

But last year, a government board declared that the film was the possession of the people of the United States and said the government had to determine how much to compensate the family for its rights.

The Justice Department has offered the family $750,000 while indicating that the upper range might reach as high as $3 million, *The Washington Post* reported yesterday.

The family deposited the original film in a National Archives vault in the 1970s, wanting to ensure its safety and preservation. The family allowed noncommercial users, such

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as teachers and students, to use the film free and charged a fee for those who wanted the film for commercial purposes.

In 1992, Congress created the Assassination Records Review Board to amass all relevant evidence in the Kennedy case. That board declared in April 1997 that the film belonged to the federal government.

The Zapruders, who say they would prefer the film belong to the nation, began talking with the Justice Department last year over compensation. The family offered to sell the film for $18.5 million, and the *Post* said the Zapruders received appraisals for the film as high as $70 million.

John Tunheim, a federal judge who is chairman of the Assassination Records Review Board, said last year the film's monetary value could be hard to agree upon.

The Zapruders fear the only option they will be left with is a lawsuit. But family members said they would prefer not to do this and would instead like to see this as a gift to the nation by not seeking the full value.